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SOCIALISM AND THE STATE: A FRENCH VIEW

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AT the end of the third volume of Macaulay's admirable *History of England* occurs this passage, written just after the disturbance of 1848:

"The proudest capitals of Western Europe have streamed with civil blood. . . . Doctrines hostile to all sciences, to all arts, to all industry, to all domestic charities, doctrines which, if carried into effect, would, in thirty years, undo all that thirty centuries have done for mankind, and would make the fairest provinces of France and Germany as savage as Congo or Patagonia, have been avowed from the tribune and defended by the sword. Europe has been threatened with subjugation by barbarians, compared with whom the barbarians who marched under Attila and Alboin were enlightened and humane. The truest friends of the people have with deep sorrow owned that interests more precious than any political privileges were in jeopardy, and that it might be necessary to sacrifice even liberty in order to save civilization."

The doctrines mentioned by Macaulay, after keeping in the background for a time, have now come to the fore again, grown little by little in force, until they have burst forth into new splendor, have given birth to organized parties which are striving every day more energetically to transform the idea into permanent acts and facts, and displaying in this work so much perseverance and audacity that, if the English historian were a witness of what is now going on, he would experience a deeper anguish than that which he expressed so eloquently sixty-four years ago.

It is now some time since the Socialist movement has shown itself in all countries, in a more or less intense form and in an apparently new shape, that of State Socialism. It is true that Socialism really remains what it has always been and what it must always be—that is, revolutionary;

for its very definition makes it so, since it proclaims itself to be the systematic enemy of all the principles necessary to the existence of civilized society and declares its platform to be their destruction.

Is it, therefore, possible to imagine that the State in a civilized country can adopt and apply the principles of Socialism? Is there not an irreducible contradiction between the two? In order to make this contradiction clear to all eyes, it is first necessary to point out the essential principles of Socialism.

What, then, is Socialism? Those who see in it only its political platform do not get beneath the surface; this is only the minor side of the matter; its least strong side. What we must discover in Socialism is the cause of this platform. This cause is simple; it is an idea, and a profoundly false one, concerning the origin of evil. At bottom, Socialism is especially a philosophical doctrine, almost a sort of religion. It believes and teaches that the inequality of conditions among men arises from laws emanating from Governments; that the State can create riches and regulate at its will the distribution of these riches; that capital is the enemy of labor; that "the development of the capitalist order is responsible for the working class"; that, in a word, all the evils, or nearly all, from which mankind suffers, are produced by "society," and that it depends upon the legislator to reorganize this society arbitrarily, in accordance with a new plan in which the State will be all and the individual nothing, when universal felicity will reign. In a word, Socialism is a peculiar conception of the nature of man, and of the rôle and the power of the State. This is its particular stamp, the essential of its errors and dangers; what follows is simply the consequence of this. Laws which put an end to property and inheritance; the nationalization of mines, factories, railways, and banks; the organization of a system of universal functionaryism—all this, and still other legislative proposals of the Socialist parties, is but the application to particular cases of the ruling idea. It does not suffice, therefore, to combat these projects separately, though this is of course necessary, for in this way you simply push them back for the moment; they crop up again immediately. The only effective remedy is to destroy the initial error which engenders all the others. This is not an easy task, as it cannot be accomplished in a day

and is an old story; for, it should be remembered, that the doctrines of the Socialists of to-day have always been known. They have invented nothing new; their conceptions are as old as human illusions.

I would not say that laws have never been or are not now unjust, that they have never established privileges for some and doomed others to inferior position and even to servitude; but these laws, which were in fact Socialistic, for they organized society though arbitrarily by violating liberty, no longer exist, at least in the United States, in France, in Switzerland, nor even in civilized monarchies, where we find only political inequalities, which are without influence, when compared with natural things, on the conditions essential to the happiness of the individual.

In order to grasp the full truth of what I say, to see it with the mind's eye as well as with the ordinary eye, we have simply to glance at the state of humanity to-day and at its state in the past. As, according to Socialism, "the capitalist organization" is the root of evil, this evil would not have existed at the beginning of our race. So the greatest well-being and the least misery should be found to-day in those parts of the globe where the capitalist régime is the least developed.

When it is stated in the presence of thousands of workmen, whose infantile imagination is enflamed by ardent words and whose untrained reason is misled by sophisms, that the difficulties of this life spring from the present social order, the inference is that humanity was born in a terrestrial paradise and that we have but to turn to the tribes of Asia, South America, Africa, and Oceania, who have kept nearest to the primitive state and furthest away, consequently, from "the capitalist state," to find there the happiest of beings dwelling among the pleasures of Eden. But I should like to see these fiery apostles of Socialism reduced to the lot of the Fuegians, the Bushmen, and the Australian aborigines, who are so completely protected from the evils of the capitalist!

On the contrary, what should be said without cessation to the workers, to those who have the hardest time in life, is that all progress implies capital, all capital implies work, all fruitful work implies liberty, all liberty implies property, and that the ideal of the human race is not behind us but before us.

The nearer man is to nature, the more he is under the domination of his enemy, the more miserable he is and the more he is the foe of his kind. Without going into a profound analysis of the human passions, we have only to regard the most visible and most certain phenomena of life to perceive that the decrease of the evils which afflict our race is in direct proportion to the development of this capitalist order whom the Socialists are never weary of anathematizing. There is no worse error than that of Rousseau. The most unfortunate, the most feeble, the most suffering of men, is the primitive man, who lives from hand to mouth, without arms, without instruments, with no capital to shield him from want for the moment while he has time to look about him in order to improve his lot. What the philosopher of Geneva saw so badly, the admirable mind of Lucretius grasped immediately and without error. What a faithful picture of the condition of man before the capitalist régime was born is traced by the powerful poet of "The Nature of Things," ignorant of all the geological and prehistoric archæological discoveries of our times, who sang:

"Then our first ancestors did not yet know how to master things by fire, nor to use skins and to cover their bodies with the skins of the wild beasts; they lived in the woods, in caves, in the forests, and hid in the brushwood their rude limbs, obliged to flee the attacks of the wind and rain."

It is from such conditions, and not from the Golden Age, that we are sprung, and if, little by little, we have reached the point where we now are, it is due to capital, which began with the first flint hammer; it is due to the incessant efforts of human genius, which tamed by degrees the forces of matter and bent them to our needs, which conceived and spread the ideas of justice, liberty, love of neighbor, conceptions so different from the ferocity and the state of soul of our first parents. But instead of continuing in this way of progress, Socialism would destroy the necessary elements and conditions which make it possible. In defiance of the most constant facts and the most profound forces of the human heart, Socialism pretends to build up a complete Utopian city, which would in fact be the worst sort of a prison, where would be confined the mind, and which would soon become the theater of the deepest misery into which humanity has ever been plunged.

No; evil does not spring from society or even from laws, which does not mean, however, that the legislature cannot better the laws. Evil springs from nature, not yet sufficiently mastered by science; it is in us, not yet sufficiently purified, sufficiently elevated by reason, by the arts, by thought; it is in the mind, in the very heart of these thaumaturgi who declare it to be in the laws and would have us believe in their chimerical power to remove it if we only confide the making of the laws to them! If ever there were a true remark, it is this: "Socialism, that is the enemy!"

But I would not have my readers say that I hold that all is for the best in the best of worlds; that evil no longer exists, that there is no injustice, that there is no social progress to be realized. All that I wish to say is that Socialism, far from curing human suffering, will only make it worse, that its innovations would produce only misery, because they would suppress the conditions which alone have been able to diminish this misery.

Having thus established, even from out its own mouth, just what Socialism is, the question may now be pertinently asked whether the State can become Socialistic without placing itself in direct contradiction with the laws of nature and the conditions of its own rôle. The whole problem lies right here. What is the State and what is its part in its relations with the individual? What is the respective sphere of each? It is not the first time that the subject has been under discussion. Long before Montesquieu, Plato and Cicero had applied their genius to the problem. Still nearer our day, William von Humboldt, in his celebrated essay which appeared in 1792, devoted all his powerful faculties to an attempt to decide what are the limits of the action of the State. About 1858, the great English philosopher, John Stuart Mill, in his excellent little book, *Liberty*; in 1884, Herbert Spencer in *The Man versus the State*; and before him that wonderful mind, too much neglected to-day, and to whom my generation owes so many generous and noble ideas, Edouard Laboulaye, in *The State and its Limits*, published in 1863, explained every hidden corner of this difficult problem.

Regardless of any special doctrines, history shows, for its part, how dangerous are the theories and illusions so much in favor to-day, not only among the charlatans, which is quite natural, but among many disinterested and well-

intentioned people desirous of progress and justice. Historical observation of this kind plainly reveals the errors of the conception of a Providential State and the benefits to be derived from a régime of complete individual liberty. Alas! how the unfortunate are deceived when they are led to believe in the all-powerfulness of the State and are promised an end of all their trials and woes through State intervention! The State has not and cannot have this chimerical power. Without entering into a philosophical and theoretical discussion of principles, of the "rights" of the individual and the "duties" of society, let us glance for a moment, purely and simply, at material facts, at the things which one sees with the eye and touches with the hand.

By whom were brought about all the progress, all the discoveries, all the conquests which have, little by little, ameliorated the lot of primitive humanity, and which shelter us to-day, in part at least, from famine and the attacks of the enemy, Nature? Who has made it possible for men to vanquish cold, time, space? Who has succeeded even in softening the habits and ferocity of the early ages? Who has caused to penetrate into our very souls love of fellow-man, the sentiment of justice, the conception of the rights of others, the sublime idea of sacrifice? It is not Governments that have accomplished this, nor States, in any period of the world's history or in any country. This was the work of individuals, of private persons. It was some unknown genius who discovered the art of making fire, of forging iron, of plowing, of crossing the oceans, of spinning, of sewing skins together, of weaving. It was some poet, philosopher, wise man, nun, who charmed our hearts with song and formed our souls by noble examples. These are the true benefactors of the human race, the real authors of civilization and progress. And how often, far from being encouraged, were they thwarted, impeded, even persecuted in their divine tasks by the blind, ignorant, cruel heads of States, as is even too frequently the case to-day with men of all conditions. It is true, fortunately for the honor of humanity, that we do frequently find wise, well-meaning Governments. But the best they could do was to aid these great men, the individuals of powerful genius, laboring for the general development of progress and the conquest of civilization.

In a civilized nation, the rôle of the State is to assure public order and to guarantee to every individual the full exercise of his faculties, that is, to see that he enjoys liberty and that the independence of his nation is not infringed upon. As for creating wealth and regulating its distribution, the State is as absolutely and unquestionably powerless as it would be in trying to change the sequence of the seasons, to modify the temperature, or to influence barometric pressure. It is only the individual who can create wealth, by his intelligence and his labor, and the freer the individual is in the exercise of his natural faculties, the more can he ameliorate not only his own situation but also the general condition of humanity. This is what history teaches us with striking evidence from the time of the earliest cave-dwellers, and it suffices, regardless of all metaphysical considerations, to determine in their grand lines and governing ideals the rôle and the limits of the State and the individual.

It is true that in answering the questions which I formulated above, the same reply does not hold good for all ages and for all countries. It is not unique, invariable, permanent, like a theorem of geometry. It admits, however, of durable elements, of varieties of experience which are constant, so that to-day we may consider certain facts so well established that they appear to have become laws. Let us specify some of the principal ones.

I repeat that universal observation shows us that nearly all the progress which has improved the material lot of man is due to individual effort, and very rarely to any intervention of the State; quite the contrary. We have seen that these efforts were often combated and retarded by the State. How many are the scientific discoveries whose authors were at first officially condemned. The long list may be said to begin with Philolaus and Aristarchus of Samos, who lived more than two thousand years before Galileo, and both of whom were exiled for having taught that the earth turned on its own axis and revolved around the sun. State action never, or almost never, appears as a creator of progress. The contrary is true. Progress is the work of the individual. But State action is eminently salutary and fecund in an indirect fashion when it comes forward as a guarantor of security and peace, which render possible the free play of individuals capable of doing things—but how

rare such individuals are!—in a word, as an efficacious principle of public order.

What is true of the scientific domain properly so called, *viz.*, mathematics, physics, chemistry, mechanics, astronomy, and so forth, is not less true of the moral domain. The idea of justice, duty, charity, love of neighbor was instilled little by little into the heart and mind of men by the noblest intelligences, by the highest and best souls, who, by the very fact that they are the best, are the least numerous; and yet how often are these grand spirits persecuted by the makers and executors of the laws!

Has the State, which has never created progress, either moral or scientific, known how to aid happily moral or material works, in conformity with or depending on the laws of progress, observing the conditions of true progress, that is to say, rendering possible the free action of the best individuals? Here again observation reveals the same results—the incapacity of the State, in fact its very nocuousness.

Direct, actual, immediate observation, as was the case with historical observation, shows that all human material progress proceeds from property and freedom of labor. You have simply to open your eyes to perceive that everywhere and always the lot of the greater number is bettered in proportion as economic liberty and security develops. There cannot be found a single example to the contrary. On the other hand, how many instances are there of progress being checked by attacks on the liberty of labor and its consequences! How long it was before this principle of principles dawned on the human mind, *viz.*, the freer individual action becomes, the more the whole community profits by it; whereas, the more collective action, that is, the State in whatever form it shows itself, paralyzes individual action, the more the community suffers from its own intervention!

For instance, if at first glance any enterprise seems to belong properly to the State, to the legislator, to the Prince, it is the providing of food for the public—in a word, all subsistence arrangements. It was the great care of the governments of the past. The Roman Republic, the Consuls, the Senate; Cæsars and Emperors, from the divine Augustus down to the lamentable Augustulus overturned by the barbarians; the kingdom of France during the whole period of

“ the thousand-year monarchy,” one and all considered it their first duty “ to feed the people.” Every effort, every institution, every system; all sorts of administrative machinery, whether the most powerful, the most subtle, or the most ingenious; all imaginable laws for arranging, interdicting, encouraging, recompensing, and punishing; all that irresistible force, hostile art, implacable will were able to invent, perfect, and combine in order to protect against famine King Populace,—all this and much else besides was set to work; and this went on from the time of the edicts of 438 B.C., down to the interminable prescriptions of the Theodosian Code, including the taking over by the State of all the fleets of the seas and the rivers. And what was the result of it all? Complete disaster! Agriculture was killed and pauperism was developed. The character and energy of the individual were enfeebled to such a point that universal servitude followed. The strain on the public treasury was so great that the State was bankrupt. Italy, the Provinces, the Empire were ruined, and fell an easy prey to the Heruli of Odoacer. Socialist laws, anti-militarism, State ownership killed the colossus.

In France, “ the sons of St. Louis ” were not less unfortunate. With the advent of Philip the Fair, the inventor of the income tax (1294 and January 12, 1295), by the aid of which this coiner of base money decreed in 1304 a series of measures tending “ to the greatest relief and greatest providing of provisions for my poor people,” the history of France from that time on is full of “ laws ” with the same end in view. To be convinced of this, one has only to read the ordinances of 1410, 1419, 1455, 1507, 1571, 1573, 1689, 1690, 1693, 1709, 1720, 1723, 1731, 1737, 1763, etc., etc.; to read the correspondence of Louis XIV.’s reign, the letters which passed between the ministers and the intendants, and those of the Comptroller-General of the Finances, from 1683 to 1715; and then one perceives that all that which the boldest Socialist and radical “ reformer ” puts forward to-day was conceived by the “ reformers ” of the old régime in their aim “ to feed the people,” to “ assure the subsistence of the people ” and “ at the lowest possible price ”; and that the most rigorous measures were taken to secure the faithful observance of these “ Socialist laws.” But all this met with the same fate as the ancient edicts of the Empire. In a word, State corn, State flour, State millers, State

bakers, State aid, and State benefactions of all kinds; no matter whether the State be a republic, an empire, a monarchy, an oligarchy, a democracy, an ochlocracy, or a tyranny,—the result is found to be the same, that is, the very contrary of what was sought! Instead of an alleviation of the ill, there was an aggravation thereof; a destruction of the only force capable of curing it; precipitated crises; ruin!

So many and such persistent lessons finally produced fruit; minds that were particularly open and penetrating became enlightened and were convinced that the only efficacious spring to human effort is liberty and responsibility, that the individual must be made to understand that the bettering of his lot depends solely on himself, that he must help himself before he asks Heaven to help him, that the more the Prince or the State usurps the place of the individual, enervates the spring of his action and leads him to believe that they can supply his wants, by so much they weaken the individual and prepare his misfortune.

This was the grand discovery of the economists of the eighteenth century. After long struggles, “the new spirit” finally triumphed, publicly and officially, when Turgot came into power in 1774. This is an important date in the history of civilization, for, for the first time, the economic rôle of the State was at last understood and set forth with an incomparable power of truth and a breadth of view. We read in the preamble of the ordinance of 1774:

“The more commerce is free, animated, and extensive, the more promptly and efficaciously does it find abundant markets; prices are more uniform and depart less from the average price on which salaries are necessarily based. The plan of the Government furnishing provisions cannot be a success. The attention of Government is too divided among many things and cannot be so active as that of the merchant wholly occupied with his own business. Consequently, when Government monopolizes the transport and guard of grain, it compromises the subsistence and the peace of its people. It is only commerce and free commerce that can correct the inequality of crops.”

The language of this ordinance made a profound impression on the public mind. One might have thought that the century-old superstitious faith in the Providential State had now vanished forever, that the servitude of man to the Prince, whether this Prince were a single person or were represented by a collection of persons, was at an end; and

that labor was finally unfettered, as it already was in fact, awaiting the moment when it would be also by law. But this illusion did not last long. Two years later, Turgot was vanquished and discharged from the ministry. Unfortunately, Louis XVI. could not bring himself to wait until these great truths had time to produce their fruits. Free commerce, industry, and labor return to the old yoke of governmental quacks, only to secure their liberty in 1789, and to lose it again under the Jacobin rule of 1793; so difficult is it to conquer and retain this prime *summum bonum* of the people, this sacred force, this unique source of all progress. But Turgot's revenge came, as I have said, in 1789, when the Rights of Man were proclaimed in France in all their plenitude, after having been proclaimed in the United States on July 4, 1776, as being the very basis of the State and not a condescending gift therefrom. Free thought and free labor, which are but the essential forms of the free possession of man by himself; and the security of property, which is but the product of that free possession, were henceforth regarded in France as axioms of civilization and progress and were announced at the head of the Constitution. And then happened in the history of France events whose political effect is of such importance that they should be meditated upon by all nations in order that these nations may draw therefrom a lesson that will save them from similar faults and cruel experiences.

The home and foreign events of the early months of 1793 had so profoundly troubled the country that their inevitable consequences were felt on every side. It was equally inevitable that the persons whose "political science" consists in exploiting public misfortune and popular credulity by promising miracles in order to secure the support and the favor of the masses, would profit by these circumstances. The "heelers" of the popular quarters of Paris appeared in the galleries of the Convention, to find on the floor accomplices not less bustling and ardent than themselves. The Jacobin delegation from the suburbs terrorized, on April 30th, the Assembly, essentially cowardly like all assemblies, by the declaration of the conscious "boss" who headed it and who exclaimed in a threatening tone: "I come in the name of ten thousand men, who are at your doors, to demand that you re-establish the maximum. If you do not do it, we will declare an insurrection!" This threat sufficed.

Four days later was issued the decree of May 4, 1793, which required every farmer, merchant, and miller to declare the quantity of grain in his possession; which provided for committees appointed by the municipalities to revise these declarations and to fix the average price of grain in accordance with the average in each department, from January 1st to May 1st; which pronounced the most rigorous punishment—death, even—for those who should conceal or destroy corn; which offered rewards to informers—in a word, a decree containing the whole series of measures which characterize “Socialist laws” engendered by those baleful “well-wishers of the People.”

Once again, material things revolted; the famine simply increased. Then the lawmakers grew stubborn. The decree concerning grain was followed, one after the other, by decrees concerning wood, coal, peat, oats, oil, butter, vinegar, meat, cattle—all kinds of imaginable merchandise; these decrees meting out penalties, fines, imprisonment, the holy guillotine, and offering bounties for the “patriotic” soup kitchen; the decrees, in a word, running the whole gamut of radical panaceas. But finally the most obstinate were forced to see things as they really were; like Philip the Fair, the Convention had to repent. The dire disasters which these “Socialist laws” brought down on the land opened the eyes of the lawmakers and with their own hands they put an end to their stupid and deadly work. On December 25, 1794, the committees of Public Safety, General Security, Legislation, and of Commerce and Finance held a joint meeting and recommended to the Convention through their chairman, Joannot, the total suppression of all the decrees relating to subsistence. The text of the report deserves to be quoted. It runs as follows:

“The short-sighted members, who, yielding to popular demands, voted in favor of the establishment of the maximum, have not had to wait long to see their mistake. . . . Thence have sprung all the laws, destructive of commerce and industry, which followed one another so rapidly. . . . If trade had not been hampered by fetters, if it had only been left to itself, if the most innocent speculations had not been regarded as crimes by the ignorant [applause on the left], the activity of the merchants would have provisioned France, notwithstanding the disasters of war, as they have done more than once in the past. But the Government usurped the place of the merchants, thereby destroying individual industry and its own riches, which it then found itself unable to restore.” [Loud applause.]

It is unnecessary to add anything to such a striking lesson in order to demonstrate the inevitable disaster sure to follow the intervention of the State in opposition to the natural laws of economic phenomena. Nor was the lesson lost. Little by little, among all nations, whatever their political form may be — monarchy, empire, republic — the axioms proclaimed in America and in France in 1776 and 1789, and determining the rôle of the State, have become part and parcel of public law. They are inscribed to-day in all Constitutions and are victoriously making the tour of the globe. And now, simultaneously in all parts, is a revival of the ancient and coarsest of errors. A furious assault is being made on the principles which alone give life. And by whom is the battle waged? By monarchs who have lost their absolute power? No! By the very enfranchised people themselves! It is the emancipated Number become Sovereign who is striving to put new irons on the individual; who would destroy the rights of man, the instruments for the bettering of his lot, the means of general progress, by destroying free labor and the liberty of contract. Formerly, the enemy was the Royal Power; to-day, it is the Uncountable Power. And the latter has recourse now to the same arms as those used by the former in the past, *viz.*, the law. It was in the name of the law, which he himself imposed, backing it by force, that the king, in times gone by, enchained liberty. It is in the name of the law, of which he has become the all-powerful creator, that the contemporary Number undertakes to destroy liberty. The nefarious work is already begun. In the countries where he can act efficaciously, in France, for instance, the first effects are beginning to be felt. Individual effort is slackening, production is diminishing, the burdens of life are growing heavier, the ascending movement is checked in proportion as the State superstition revives and spreads. If it finally triumphs, it will be a new invasion of the barbarians, in another form but similarly disastrous; and it is advancing! Many pretend not to see it, because it does not march armed with torch and ax, but with the Law in its hand; and this is the very reason why it is the more dangerous. But there is some comfort in the knowledge that the will of man is powerless here; that what these innovators preach is in contradiction with Things; and the former cannot avail against the latter. It is the old battle over again, the free com-

merce of grain vainly proclaimed by Turgot in 1774. It is untrammelled science and its works which feeds the nations and checks famine, as far as the laws of nature permit. No written law or State can do anything here. The same thing is true of all economic phenomena and of all that can be done to improve the lot of man. The solution can be found only in the free efforts of individuals.

The material facts which are happening before our very eyes are new proofs of this, new proofs of what has occurred in all epochs and in all countries. Let us turn, for instance, and note the results obtained in America by private effort as compared with those obtained in Europe, in the countries where the hand of the State weighs everywhere more or less heavily and where it often exercises a positive harm. Such a comparison redounds strikingly to the credit of private initiative and to the discredit of State interference. We first turn to France. In France the telegraph is a State monopoly; in the United States, the contrary is the case. In France, there are about 450,000 kilometers of wire, whereas in America I find that the figures surpass 2,700,000 kilometers, in taking into account only the most important companies. In France the telephone was at first a private enterprise. But the State is jealous when it sees anybody doing anything new, so it monopolized the telephone, as it did the telegraph; and here is the result. In France, with its 40,000,000 of inhabitants, there are about 130,000 kilometers of telephone wires and 232,743 telephones. In the United States, my statistics show 22,326,000 kilometers of wire and 7,596,000 telephones for 93,000,000 inhabitants. That is to say, in the United States private industry furnishes one telephone for about twelve inhabitants, while in France there is one for about every 171 inhabitants. In France the State has a tight grip on the railway systems. They owe their existence to the State and live under its authority, it might almost be said under its legislative and administrative absolutism, cramped in some directions by contracts which the State is ever ready to violate. And what do we find? In 1910, we had about 50,000 kilometers of railways, or one kilometer for every 800 inhabitants, while in the United States, where railways enjoyed until 1887 an almost absolute liberty and where, luckily for the country, they are freer than anywhere in Europe, we find that in 1910 there were about 403,000 kilometers, or one for

every 230 inhabitants. When compared with the whole of Europe, the showing is still better. Thus, there are about 330,000 kilometers in all Europe—that is, the 93,000,000 inhabitants of the United States possess 70,000 more kilometers of railways than the 450,000,000 Europeans! And yet it was in Europe that the locomotive was invented and that railways were first built. But the United States soon outstripped all Europe. At the end of 1847, the United States, on account of the freedom of individual enterprise, and the absence of all legislative and administrative hampering, had in operation more than 8,400 kilometers of road, while England had 5,318, Germany 5,291, France 2,018, and all Europe 14,205. But at the end of 1883, things had greatly changed. According to the official tables of our Ministry of Public Works, all Europe then had 183,131 kilometers and the United States 194,000; that is, Europe was 11,000 behind, while to-day it is 70,000 behind.

To whatever field of human activity one turns, the same thing is found to be true—superiority of individual initiative and liberty of work, inferiority of State action, always heavier, slower, more costly, less fecund. What, then, would not be the disastrous consequences if the day ever comes when the State, no longer satisfied with simple intervention and moderate regulation, should become the sole, direct, and universal agent of labor and of the economic product of a people?

Thus the conclusion of our examination is decisive. The incapacity of the State as a creator of progress, whether material or moral, is a fact beyond question. The works which pertain to this sphere of civilization are foreign to the rôle of the State and belong exclusively to the individual left free but protected. The part of the State is to assure order, and it is an important part, for without order, the efforts of the individual creators of progress are lost in the chaos of blind home or foreign disorder. Hence, in the front rank of the duties of the State stands the defense of the frontiers, the protection of the nation from an outside enemy, and at the same time, a similar protection of person and property at home. There is no “Socialist law” which can dispense with the necessity of the soldier, cannon, marines, ironclads, the constable, the policeman, the gendarme, the judge.

None of us are prophets. Nobody can say what will be

the condition of our race thousands of centuries hence. But we know what it always has been and what it cannot be in the present state of the world. It is absolutely subject to the law which requires all to labor. By obeying this law, man has been able, up to the present, to better his lot, and it is by continuing to obey it that he alone can hope to make further progress. Those who dream of obtaining this progress, not only through their own effort but by the aid of the State, are dupes of the most dangerous error. Outside the limits of its rôle as I have defined it the State becomes the great fiction, where everybody tries to live at the expense of everybody. Those who pretend to be statesmen but who make laws and govern regardless of the nature of things will not succeed in transforming the State into a Providence, but into a Scourge.

JULES ROCHE.